REMARKS

In response to the Office Action mailed on August 21, 2008, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration. All of the issues raised in the Office Action have been carefully considered and are addressed herein.

Claims 1, 3, 7-9, 11-19 and 21-27 are pending in this application, with claims 1, 17, and 18 being independent claims. In this paper, claims 1, 7, 11, 12, 15, and 17-19 have been amended to more particularly define the subject matter Applicants regard as their invention, as well as to correct the noted informalities and improve readability. Further, claims 2, 4-6, 10, 16, and 20 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, and new claims 22-27 have been added. No new matter has been introduced.

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, the pending application is believed to be in condition for allowance.

I.   Claim Rejections and Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 1, 3, 13, 15-16 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 7,364,343 (Keuper). Further, claims 1, 7-8, 11-13, 15-16 and 18-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) as allegedly anticipated by JP 2001-281456 (Osumi). Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Osumi. Claims 9 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Keuper and Osumi in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,672,734 (Lammers).

Applicants note with appreciation that claim 17 contain allowable subject matter. Independent claims 1 and 18 have been amended and new independent claim 22 has been added to include certain features of allowed claim 17. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that independent claims 1, 18 and 22 are allowable, as well. In particular, Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections, to the extent they are maintained over the claims, as amended, and submit that claims 1, 3, 7-9, 11-16, 18-19 and 21-27 are patentable over Keuper, Osumi and Lammers for at least the following reasons.

A.   Keuper

At the outset, Applicants note that Keuper fails to qualify as prior art to the present application under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) (or §103(a)), because the present application has an effective filing date of **March 28, 2002**, which is <u>before</u> the Keuper effective date of, at best, the PCT filing date of December 5, 2002 (and not its foreign priority claim date of December 7, 2001).

B.   Osumi and Lammers

Osumi is directed to a light transmission plate that widens from a first edge provided with a light source, towards a second edge, as shown in FIG 2. In stark contrast, the light-emitting panel recited in independent claim 1, and similarly recited in independent claims 18 and 22, widens over:

<u>(i)</u>   a first widening section from the first edge surface in a direction towards the second edge surface and

<u>(ii)</u>   a second widening section from the second edge surface in a direction towards the first edge surface,

These features are nowhere disclosed or suggested in Osumi. Lammers is cited to allegedly show other features and does not remedy the deficiencies in Osumi. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that independent claims 1, 18 and 22 should be allowable, and allowance thereof is respectfully requested.

II.   General Comments on the Rejections of Dependent Claims

Since each of the dependent claims depends from a base claim that is believed to be in condition for allowance, Applicants believe that it is unnecessary at this time to argue the allowability of each of the dependent claims individually. However, Applicants do not necessarily concur with the interpretation of the dependent claims as set forth in the Office Action, nor do Applicants concur that the bases for the rejection of any of the dependent claims

is proper. Therefore, Applicants reserve the right to specifically address the patentability of the dependent claims in the future if deemed necessary.

III.   <u>New Claims</u>

New claims 22-27 (including new independent claim 22) have been added to further distinguish Applicants' contribution to the art.   Each of these claims is believed to patentably distinguish over the cited art of record, and is in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

It is respectfully believed that all of the rejections, objections, or comments set forth in the Office Action have been addressed. However, the absence of a reply to a specific rejection, objection, or comment set forth in the Office Action does not signify agreement with or concession of that rejection, objection, or comment. In addition, there may be reasons for patentability of any or all pending claims (or other claims) that have not been expressed. Furthermore, nothing in this paper should be construed as an intent to concede any issue with regard to any claim.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, this application should now be in condition for allowance. A notice to this effect is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes, after this amendment, that the application is not in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the Applicants' representative at the telephone number indicated below to discuss any outstanding issues relating to the allowability of the application.

If this response is not considered timely filed and if a request for an extension of time is otherwise absent, Applicants hereby request any necessary extension of time. If there is a fee occasioned by this response, including an extension fee, please charge any deficiency to Deposit Account No. 14/1270.

Dated: November 11, 2008   Respectfully submitted,

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